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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence CouncilNIC #2991-83
21 April 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM

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Assistant National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

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SUBJECT

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Monthly Warning Assessment - USSR-EE

1. USSR: Significance of Recent Promotions and other actions.A. Discussion.

Andropov is moving adroitly and step by step to consolidate his power. Some of the key events of the past weeks have been:

- The elevation of Andropov's ally Gromyko to be First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, thus allowing Andropov better to control all aspects of foreign policy and diminishing the influence of the Party apparatus where Chernenko's allies are.
- The convening of an extraordinary Central Committee conference on agriculture, which allowed Andropov to place himself in the limelight (particularly in light of Chernenko's inexplicable absence) without arousing expectations of personnel changes, which would have been the case if the meeting had been billed as a fullfledged plenum.
- The promotions of three military leaders to Marshals of the Soviet Union. There is an aura of mystery about these promotions because they do not follow the normal pattern of occurring either after a change in assignment or in connection with some holiday. The elevation of 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff Akhromeyev is particularly puzzling since that position has not rated a Marshal's title since the 1930's. The absence from public view of Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov led some analysts to speculate that he may be in poor health and could soon be replaced by Akhromeyev. Analysts unanimously rejected the hypothesis that Akhromeyev's promotion may have been the precursor to a more complicated series of moves in which Ustinov would replace Tikhonov as

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Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Ogarkov replace Ustinov, and Akhromeyev replace Ogarkov. The main argument against this hypothesis are that 1) Andropov would probably prefer to name someone younger than Ustinov Chairman of the Council of Ministers and 2) the Soviets normally do not make military promotions prior to reassignments. (Comment: A/NIO/USSR-EE recognizes the validity of these points but believes that political exigencies may override these considerations and lead to a reshuffle of the government along the lines outlined above.) No matter what happens in the future, the net affect of the promotions so far probably has been to strengthen further Andropov's relationship with Ustinov and the top levels of the military.

Andropov is likely to continue gradually strengthening his position and ability to shape policy. Although this approach has ruled out rapid, dramatic personnel changes at the top similar to the ones made by Khrushchev and Brezhnev in their first six months in office, it is probably laying the groundwork for exactly such changes when Andropov feels ready for them.

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2. Arms Control.

A. Discussion.

1) START: The primary Soviet goal is to severely restrict the US strategic force modernization program by arriving at an agreement along the lines of SALT II. Moscow has shown no interest in negotiating on the basis of the US START proposal or even in simply negotiating actively or seriously. The outlook for any kind of agreement anytime soon must therefore be characterized as rather bleak. The main reasons for this continued lack of movement on the Soviets' part are : a) they want to see how the INF negotiations develop before moving on START and b) they see a strong constituency in the US for SALT II or a nuclear freeze. There was general agreement around the table that the Soviets will not significantly modify their position until they see what happens to the planned US INF deployment in Europe. They have positioned themselves to take INF systems into account in the START negotiations should that become necessary, making use of their codewords "equality and equal security" to make the link explicit.

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2) INF: The last round saw no substantive progress, with both sides tabling their criteria, which are, not surprisingly, antithetical to one another. The Soviets seem to be increasingly pessimistic about the likelihood of preventing US INF deployments through the manipulation of Western European public opinion. In the near-term, Moscow is likely to move to recapture the initiative from the US by making a counter-proposal which could entail bringing the SS-20s West of 80° East significantly below 162. By switching to warheads as the unit of account, they could do this without giving up the linkage to UK and French forces. Such a move could happen as early as during the upcoming round of talks in Geneva, with Moscow going public in September, or perhaps earlier.

In the longer-term the Soviets will probably not countenance any agreement which entails and therefore legitimizes any US deployment. Rather they will probably seek to delay US deployments while continuing negotiations in some form. Nevertheless analysts did not dismiss the possibility that the Soviets might come to accept an agreement which foresaw GLCM deployments only and which treated Soviet systems in the Far East in a differential fashion (e.g., no reductions but a cap at existing levels.) The Soviets will not seek such a deal but, if international circumstances warrant, could respond to a US signal by engaging us in a serious dialogue.

If there is not agreement, the Soviets will probably wait until US deployments start (i.e. December) before beginning their own threatened so-called counter-deployments. The Soviets remain vague about the nature of counter-deployments but are currently downplaying their threats to put the US in an "analogous position". It is possible that any Soviet response would take a long time to unfold, perhaps well into 1984 and 1985, as US deployments are scheduled to take place over several years and as the Soviets might tie their actions to the US presidential campaign and its outcome.

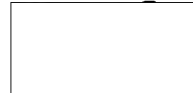
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3. Current Soviet Readings of the US:

In a report on his recent visit to Moscow, a State/INR analyst highlighted the pessimism of all his Soviet interlocutors about US-Soviet relations. Staffers at the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada as well as journalists blamed President Reagan's ideological

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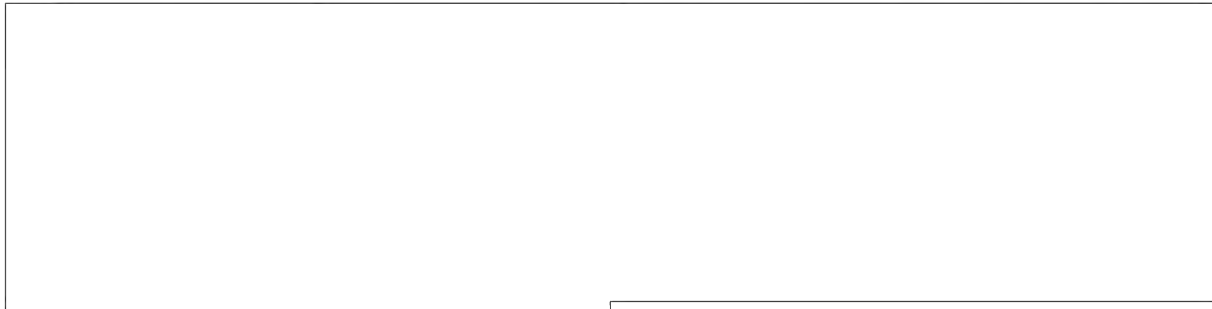
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stance and policy for the deterioration of relations. More interestingly, they expected President Reagan to be reelected but reevealed little sense or imagination about how the USSR might then try to effect the US-Soviet relationship.

4. Soviet-Syrian Relations

A. Discussion. There has been no confirmation or follow-up to the recent spate of rumors about an allegedly impending Andropov visit. Rather the focus of Soviet-Syrian intercourse has been on working out effective arrangements between newly arrived Soviet personnel and the Syrian military, most importantly but not exclusively between the Soviet-manned SA-5 systems and the rest of the Syrian air defense network. Despite the frictions inherent in the process and occasional Soviet boorishness, Soviet-Syrian ties have been measurably strengthened since the Bekaa valley debacle last June. Analysts did not expect major changes but did have two fundamental questions which are treated below.



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